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U.S. COURT BARS DON FROM RUNNING FOR PRESIDENT IN COLORADO STATE

Trump said he will appeal to the US Supreme Court to overturn the decision, setting up a court battle that could reshape the 2024 race

RULING DOESN'T APPLY OUTSIDE COLORADO

In its order, the Colorado Supreme Court cited Trump's role in the 2021 US Capitol attack. The disqualification was based on the 14th Amendment, which bans those engaging in insurrection from holding office. The ruling doesn't apply outside Colorado. But if courts in more states followed suit, then Trump's 2024 White House bid could face serious problems | P12

NIKKI HALEY, VIVEK RAMASWAMY FLY ORDER

■ Republican candidate Nikki Haley said it's the voters, not judges, who should decide the fate of candidates. Another GOP candidate Vivek Ramaswamy said he would withdraw from the Colorado ballot until Trump is reinstated
■ Trump has consistently denied any role in the January 6, 2021 US Capitol riot and termed the 14th Amendment lawsuits an abuse of the legal process

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U.S. COURTS HAVE SO FAR DISMISSED LAWSUITS CITING THE 14TH AMENDMENT



Union Home Minister Amit Shah replying to the debate in the Lok Sabha | P11

CRIMINAL LAW BILLS OKAYED IN LOK SABHA

Amid suspension of 97 members of the Lower House, including two on Wednesday...

PREETHA NAIR @ New Delhi

THE Lok Sabha on Wednesday passed the three bills to overhaul the country's criminal justice system by voice vote even as 97 Opposition MPs remained suspended from the Lower House following protests over security breach in Parliament on December 13. Two more Opposition members were suspended from the Lok Sabha earlier in the day, taking their total to an unprecedented 143.

While the Bharatiya Nyaya (Second) Sanhita 2023 will replace the IPC, the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha (Second) Sanhita is in place of the CrPC. The Bharatiya Sakshya (Second) Bill replaces the Indian Evidence Act.

Union home minister Amit Shah said they were drafted after comprehensive consultations, adding he had gone through every comma and full stop of the draft legislation before bringing them before the House for approval.

Highlighting the key features of the bills, Shah said that the proposed laws would punish mob lynching with capital punishment. "P Chidambaram kept asking me what about the mob lynchings? He does not understand the BJP and our mentality. Why did you not penalise mob lynching during your rule? If one's mind is Indian, you will understand the laws. If it is Italian, you won't," Shah said while replying to the debate on the bills.

Stressing that the three laws were based on justice, trans-

parency, and fairness, Shah said sedition laws had been overhauled and would be applied only when the country is targeted. "The three proposed laws also have a clear definition of terrorism, drop sedition as a crime, and introduce a new section titled 'offences against the state'. Any act against the sovereignty, unity and integrity of the nation will be punishable," Shah said.

In the new definition of terrorism, counterfeit currency trade and causing the death of public functionaries are defined as acts of terrorism.

Among the key changes to the IPC are making gang-rap punishable with 20 years in prison or life imprisonment.

The new bills also award death penalty for rape of a minor and two-year jail sentence for revealing the identity of victims of sexual assault.

Besides, harming a woman's mental health will be defined as cruelty. "The three new bills seek to establish a justice system based on Indian thinking... Three proposed criminal laws will free people from the colonial mindset and its symbols," he said.

In other key changes, Shah said community service has been added as a new form of punishment. Also, undertrials who are first-time offenders can be bailed out after one-third of the jail sentence and half the time of the sentence. Besides, the new bills have a provision of trial in absentia for fugitives taking refuge abroad for terror acts and other offences in India.

DEATHS DUE TO MEDICAL NEGLIGENCE SET TO BE CRIMINALISED, SAYS AMIT SHAH

"Currently, if there is a death due to negligence of a doctor, it is also treated as criminal negligence, almost akin to murder. Therefore, I will bring an official amendment to free the doctors from this criminal negligence," Shah said while replying to the debate. The announcement was hailed by the medicos and the various medical associations, especially the Indian Medical Association | P9

Five guarantee schemes, rising gold prices dent mass marriage scheme

ASHWINI M SRIPAD @ Bengaluru

THE State Government is finding it difficult to implement its Mangalya Bhagya scheme (mass marriage), where mass marriages are held for brides and grooms from poor families. The reasons for this are diversion of funds for the government's five guarantee schemes and increasing gold prices.

The scheme was announced when BS Yediyurappa was CM in 2020. It was then called "Saptha-padi". But his government could not implement it that year due to the pandemic. The scheme, under the Endowments Ministry, was launched in 2021. Under this scheme, a bridegroom will be giv-



en a shirt and a dhoti and Rs 5,000, while the bride will get a silk saree, Rs 1,000 and an 8-gm gold mangalsutra. After the Congress came to power, it renamed the scheme as Mangalya Bhagya. The government needs around Rs 60,000 crore per annum to implement its five guarantees. The gold price was Rs 62,800 per 10 gm on Wednesday and this will add to the financial burden of the government. Mass marriages un-

der the scheme were held from 2022 to March 2023. No mass marriages have been held after the Congress assumed power.

Sources said the Endowment Department had finalised some auspicious dates for mass marriages in November and December and January next. "We have some auspicious dates post Sankranti," the sources said.

An official said that mass marriages under the scheme need huge funds as a large number of beneficiaries take part in them. Hence, the government is not forthcoming. Although Endowment Minister Ramalinga Reddy said the government will implement the scheme, he did not say from when.

Karnataka second in active Covid-19 cases, decides to ramp up daily tests

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

KARNATAKA stands second in the country, next to Kerala, in terms of total active Covid-19 cases as on December 20, according to data revealed at a review meeting held by the Union Health Ministry on public health preparedness.

As on December 20, 2,305 active cases were registered across the country. Kerala recorded 2,041 cases while Karnat-

taka had 79. However, a small relief is that these cases are mild.

Karnataka Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao, who attended the virtual meeting of health ministers from all states and union territories chaired by Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya, said Karnataka leads the country in the number of tests conducted per day.

The state is conducting more than 1,000 tests a day and by

Saturday, it will touch 5,000.

The Union Health Minister emphasised the need for proactive preparations to tackle the rising Covid-19 cases in the country.

He further stressed the need to ensure sufficient supply of oxygen, medicines and improved storage facilities. He also called for setting up more ICUs and beds in hospitals. Karnataka has taken steps to put these measures in place, Gundu Rao elaborated. P3



People wearing masks in Bengaluru on Wednesday | SHASHIDHAR BYRAPPA

3 Covid-19 deaths in Bengaluru since Dec 15

Three people, including a 44-year-old asymptomatic man, who had tested positive for Covid-19 have died since December 15 in Bengaluru. It was found that all three were suffering from comorbidities

DKS draws flak for seeking Central grant for B'luru tunnel road project

ASHWINI M SRIPAD @ Bengaluru

DEPUTY Chief Minister DK Shivakumar has drawn flak for seeking funds for his ambitious Rs 30,000-crore 60-km tunnel road in Bengaluru even before getting approval for it.

Many in the government have taken exception to his move of taking it up with Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

In a letter to Nirmala Sitharaman, Shivakumar stated that Bengaluru has become one



Deputy CM DK Shivakumar greets Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in New Delhi on Wednesday | EXPRESS

of the most congested cities in the world. This tunnel project will help ease traffic in the city.

The project will also help create an East-West and North-South corridor within the city and connect major arterial roads.

Shivakumar stated that the project has been estimated at Rs 30,000 crore. The project can be implemented jointly by the State government and the National Highways Authority of India as it connects some national highways. He urged the union finance minister to earmark funds in the budget for the project. P4

On Pannun, PM says India committed to rule of law

YESHI SELI @ New Delhi

IN his first comments on the US indictment of an Indian in the alleged plot to kill a Khalistani radical on American soil, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said his government was ready to look into any evidence on the conspiracy, adding a few incidents will not derail Indo-

US ties. The US Justice Department had on November 29 claimed that Indian national Nikhil Gupta was part of a murder-for-hire plot to bump off Gurupatwant Singh Pannun, who holds dual US and Canadian citizenship. Gupta, it further alleged, was handled by an unnamed officer in New Delhi. India has since set up a

high-level committee to look into the allegations.

"If someone gives us any information, we would definitely look into it," Modi said in an interview to British daily *Financial Times*, which broke the story on the indictment. "If a citizen of ours has done anything good or bad, we are ready to look into it. Our commitment

is to the rule of law," he said.

Modi went on to share his deep concern over the activities of extremist groups based overseas, like Pannun's Sikhs for Justice, which is banned in India. "These elements, under the guise of freedom of expression, have engaged in intimidation and incited violence," he said.

I.N.D.I.A meet goes South as Nitish snaps at DMK neta

PREETHA NAIR @ New Delhi

THE INDIA alliance meeting witnessed some tense moments on Tuesday after Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar launched a tirade against DMK leader T R Baalu, who requested an English translation of the former's Hindi speech.

An Opposition leader said Baalu sought RJD leader Manoj Jha's help for translation as he was unable to understand Nitish's speech. When Jha, who was seated next to the Bihar CM, sought permission to translate, the JD(U) leader snapped: "We call our country Hindustan and Hindi is our national language. We should learn the language."

The other leaders intervened to de-escalate the situation as Nitish was visibly agitated. "Otherwise, the situation would have gone out of control," said a leader, adding that Manoj Jha had translated speeches for DMK leaders in the previous INDIA bloc meetings. However, the issue was not discussed further after the meeting.

Baalu attended the meet along with Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin.

Sources said Nitish's speech was in the beginning of the meeting and the heated exchange happened much before TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee and Aam Aadmi Party leader Arvind Kejriwal proposed Mallikarjun Kharge as the PM face of the alliance in the 2024 elections. "He (Nitish) looked unsettled from the beginning of the meeting," said a leader.



T R Baalu

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